

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Saudi Arabia—Blanket Order Training

The Government of Saudi Arabia requested a possible sale of continued blanket order training program inside and outside of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that includes, but is not limited to, flight training, technical training, professional military education, specialized training, mobile training teams (MTTs), and English language training. These blanket order training cases cover all relevant types of training offered by or contracted through the U.S. Air Force or Department of Defense (DoD) Agencies, to include participation in CONUS DOD-sponsored education, as well as MTTs that will travel to Saudi Arabia. This training for the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) and other Saudi forces will include such subjects as civilian casualty avoidance, the law of armed conflict, human rights command and control, and targeting via MTTs and/or broader Programs of Instruction (POIs). Program management, trainers, simulators, travel, billeting, and medical support may also be included. The estimated program cost is \$750 million.

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of an important partner which has been and continues to be a leading contributor of political stability and economic progress in the Middle East.

This training would support the United States' continued commitment to Saudi Arabia's security and strengthen the U.S.-Saudi Arabia strategic partnership. Assisting the RSAF supports Saudi Arabia in deterring hostile actions and increases U.S.-Saudi Arabia military interoperability. It also helps their ability to work with coalition partners during training, exercises, and operations. Saudi Arabia will have no difficulty absorbing this training and support.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to Saudi Arabia.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale. All defense articles/services have been approved for release.

CONFIRMATION OF AMUL R. THAPAR

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I could not support Judge Amul Thapar's nomination to fill the vacancy on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. I was extremely concerned about Judge Thapar's views about how the law applies to the issue of money in politics. According to Judge Thapar, "there is simply no difference between saying that one supports an organization by using words and saying that one supports an organization by donating money." His opinion on the role of money in politics in *Winter v. Wolnitzek* was so extreme that, even in this post-Citizens United era, it was unanimously overruled by the Sixth Circuit. Judge Thapar's willingness to dismiss ethical rules created to avoid partisanship and to ensure impartiality is troubling and prevented me from supporting his nomination.

Ever since the Supreme Court rulings in *Citizens United v. FEC* and

McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission, No. 12-536, our political system has been infiltrated by dark money. The untraceable and unlimited amount of money pouring into elections has changed our political system for the worse, and Americans across party lines agree. Eighty-four percent of Americans think that money has too much influence in politics, and over half of Americans think that politicians only promote policies in support of their donors and not their voters. President Trump has nominated a judge who wants to erode what few protections currently exist to limit money in politics and whose views are outside of the mainstream.

Judge Thapar's views on money in politics may be among the reasons why the conservative Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation included Judge Thapar on the short list of possible Supreme Court nominees that they prepared for President Trump. I find President Trump's outsourcing of the judicial selection process to third-party organizations alarming. Traditionally, Presidential administrations have consulted with Senators of both parties as they selected judicial nominees. The Trump administration consults with partisan organizations instead.

The very fact that this vacancy existed is another example of Republican obstructionism and the unnecessary politicization of the judiciary. Former-President Obama nominated Judge Lisabeth Tabor Hughes to fill this vacant seat in March 2016. Much like the Supreme Court seat vacated by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, Republicans refused to hold a hearing or fill the seat.

The seat should have been filled long ago, but regardless, Judge Thapar is not the right person to fill it now.

OREGON JEWISH MUSEUM AND CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I want to acknowledge an exciting moment in Oregon's history: the grand opening of the new Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education in Portland. The 15,000-square-foot museum now has a permanent place in our State where anyone can come to learn and experience Jewish culture and history.

Jews have lived in Oregon for more than 165 years. Many immigrated here to escape the horrors of the Holocaust; others came with the hope of finding a new life in a new land. I am the son of immigrants who fled Nazi Germany, so this history is especially personal. As a proud American Jew, I know that for each dark chapter in our history, there is a story of perseverance, of hope, of triumph. The rich traditions and culture within the Jewish community must be preserved and taught for generations to come. That is why I am so proud of the work done by the commu-

nity in Oregon and by the Portland museum staff and board to bring this museum to an even grander scale.

The museum has come a long way from its initial beginnings when it was known as the museum without walls. From the first exhibition, "Jews of Greece," at the Multnomah County Central Library in 1990, interest grew and so has the museum's footprint. Now, with this new state-of-the-art facility, the museum will continue to educate and open the minds of many about the experiences of Oregon's vibrant Jewish community. In fact, it continues to be the only community repository for displaying that experience in my home State.

It is my distinct honor to recognize the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education. It brings incredible exhibitions to our State, provides a full-time Holocaust educator to help those who want to learn more about this tragic piece of history, and remains the steward of the Oregon Holocaust Memorial in Portland's Washington Park. I am greatly appreciative for all this museum does and will do for Oregon.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, with amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 1083. An act to amend section 1214 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for stays during a period that the Merit Systems Protection Board lacks a quorum.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1761. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to criminalize the knowing consent of the visual depiction, or life transmission, of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1973. An act to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 4355(a), and the